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Sen. Dodd's Proposal

Red Concessions To Get U.S. Credit

By Roscoe Drummond

WASHINGTON.

Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, D., Conn., is convinced—and, I think, rightly—that the U. S. is throwing away an incalculable opportunity by proposing increased trade with the Soviet bloc without using such trade as a means to try to abate the cold war.

On the basis of a scholarly study of "The Many Crises of the Soviet Economy" prepared for the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Dodd goes to the nub of the matter in these words:

"Since the Soviets require our grain, our equipment, our raw materials and our credits as a matter of the greatest urgency and perhaps even as

a matter of survival, there is every reason to believe that a firm attitude on the part of the West will produce political concessions on the part of the Soviets."

Sen. Dodd is making a sound and constructive proposal. In offering to provide grain, machinery and credits desperately needed by Russia, the West ought to get something it desperately wants, namely, resolving some of the causes of the cold war.

Why not try? Why pass up a potentially valuable diplomatic initiative?

The case for using East-West trade and credits to get some concessions from the Soviets obviously rests on how badly the Soviets need what we have to offer. The economic shortcomings of the Soviet Union are far greater than most people realize. These deficiencies have been showing themselves piecemeal for several years. The Dodd report puts them together and they reveal a pattern of sustained and widespread agricultural, industrial and raw materials crises which show no sign of coming to an end.

In 1962 Premier Khrushchev foresaw a continuously "expanding" Soviet agriculture, and two years later he was in the world market for all the grain he could buy.

In 1961, 193,000 tractors and 21,000 grain combines and 20,000 forage harvesters could not be operated because spare parts were not available.

The production per acre of urgently required fertilizer in Russia is less than one-eighth that in West Germany.

The repair of existing machine tools in the Soviet Union requires three and a half times as many workers as produce them.

At any given time 40 per cent of all vehicles are idle waiting repair.

In 1960, 40 per cent of Soviet television sets developed defects during the six-month guarantee period. A year later, it was 52 per cent. In 1962, 61 per cent.

"If the Soviet economy were healthy, if increased East-West trade were a matter of secondary importance to it," says Sen. Dodd in his report, "then obviously we could not pose conditions in discussing trade with the Communist bloc. But if the Soviets need such trade desperately, as the facts indicate, they do, then the situation provides us with a leverage which should not be ignored."

If we are going to bail the Soviets out of their self-made agricultural and industrial crises, the Senator's idea is that we ought to put to the Kremlin our own agenda for a meaningful detente on which he would include:

(1) End subversive activities; (2) respect the International Patent Convention; (3) cease dumping Soviet oil on the world market; (4) remove the Berlin Wall; (5) live up to post-war agreements to unite Germany through free elections.

If U. S. policy is to move in this direction, the decision will have to be made in the White House.

I would think that the facts and the conclusions of the Dodd report would appeal strongly to President Johnson for two reasons:

They offer a concrete way to seize the diplomatic initiative without any risk of war.

They come at a time when both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Khrushchev may want to find ways to reduce the tensions of the cold war.

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